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CURRENT LITERATURE.

BOOK REVIEWS.

Britton's manual.¹

SUCH will probably be the familiar designation of a book that covers the area so long known as that of Gray's *Manual*. It is a book that has long been waited for, since it puts into sharp contrast the two extreme views concerning species and nomenclature. So long as the conservative position in reference to these matters was represented by the only handy manual of our best known region it was immensely strengthened, since it did the chief training in the use of manuals. Now, however, the issue is squarely joined, and both views will get that support which comes from usage. It seems to the reviewer, therefore, that some arguments heretofore used against the so-called radical views will disappear, and that the real test of usage can now be applied to both positions.

The position of Professor Britton as to species and nomenclature is too well known to need explanation. For the first time, we have a manual presentation of the idea of species applied to the ultimate recognizable segregates of plants. It is now to be tested whether those of ordinary training and experience can determine species in this new sense, or whether the use of a manual must now pass out of the reach of amateurs and be restricted to specialists. For example, can an amateur distinguish the 43 species of *Viola* found in Britton's *Manual* as he can 18 species found in Gray's *Manual*; or the 13 species of *Sisyrinchium* and the 15 species of *Antennaria* found in the former, as he can the two and one species of the latter? This is not intended as the slightest criticism of the work of segregation now going on, much of which is undoubtedly necessary; but it is raising the question whether the use of manuals is not hereafter to be very much restricted. It undoubtedly will remove them from elementary botanical courses, which at least will be a valuable service.

For the first time, also, there is a manual presentation of the so-called reform nomenclature, and the new names will now have a chance to become as familiar as the old. So long as they appeared only in journals and monographs and bulky volumes there was no chance for popular usage, and their unfamiliarity always scored a point against them. There could be no wiser move towards setting the reform nomenclature upon its feet than the

¹ BRITTON, NATHANIEL LORD: Manual of the flora of the northern states and Canada. 8vo. pp. x+1080. New York: Henry Holt and Company. 1901. \$2.25.

preparation of a handy manual which presents it, provided, of course, that this same manual makes it possible for the great host of amateurs to determine their plants with satisfaction.

Concerning the other features of this *Manual* there can be no real discussion. The Engler and Prantl sequence is a matter of course, and is not under discussion as contrasted with that used in Gray's *Manual*. The use of the metric system is another well approved step which calls for no special comment, except that our manuals have been too slow in adopting it.

As to the work of the publishers, it deserves very high praise. Thin but tough paper, clear type, and narrow margins, so that a book of over 1000 pages can be carried in a good-sized pocket and can be bought for \$2.25 is a triumph of the publisher's art and common sense.—J. M. C.

MINOR NOTICES.

A MONOGRAPH of the North American Sordariaceae has been published by David Griffiths.² After a general discussion of distribution, methods, development, and spore dissemination, the six genera are presented as follows: *Sordaria* (13 spp., 5 new), *Pleuraea* (31 spp., 13 new), *Hypocopra* (9 spp., 3 new), *Delitschia* (9 spp., 5 new), *Sporormia* (15 spp., 7 new), and *Sporormiella* (1 sp.). Material from over 20 states was studied, and the period of development of many of the species determined.—J. M. C.

ARTHUR H. CHURCH has begun the publication of studies "On the relation of phyllotaxis to mechanical laws." The first part³ now before us deals with construction by orthogonal trajectories. A general historical discussion of phyllotaxy is followed by a record of observations accompanied by handsome half-tone illustrations representing chiefly high orthostichies. This is followed by discussions of the geometrical representation of growth, the application of spiral-vortex construction, ideal angles, and asymmetry.—J. M. C.

THE FOURTH PART of Engler's *Pflanzenreich* has appeared, and contains the Monimiaceae (family 101 of the spermatophyte series) by Janet Perkins and Ernst Gilg. After the usual discussion of the important structural features of the family, and its geographic distribution, there follows the systematic presentation. Thirty-one genera are recognized, six of which have been established heretofore by Miss Perkins. The species are 253 in number, by far the largest genera being *Siparuna* (89 spp.) and *Mollinedia* (71 spp.).—J. M. C.

² Mem. Torr. Bot. Club 11: 1-134. pls. 1-19. 1901.

³ CHURCH, A. H.: On the relation of phyllotaxis to mechanical laws. Part I. Construction of orthogonal trajectories. pp. 38. figs. 34. Oxford: Williams and Norgate. 1901. 3s. 6d.